

2004/0119740 ("Chang") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,792,448 ("Smith").

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections.

In a previous Office Action of February 13, 2006, the Examiner characterized Chang as prior art under 35 USC 102(e). Accordingly, the invention must be described in "(1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b) by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent."

However, the effective filing date of the present application predates the filing date of the Chang application (i.e., present application effective filing date October 23, 2002 versus the Chang filing date of December 24, 2002). Thus, Chang is not a valid prior art reference. As a result, Applicant respectfully submits that the claim rejections should be withdrawn by the Examiner.

Smith generally discloses a threaded text discussion or chat system. A threaded discussion message pane 72 renders messages in a threaded or tree structure (4:57-58).

However, Smith fails to disclose or teach each and every element of the claims as recited in claim 1 (nor does the Examiner assert that Smith does so). For example, Smith fails to disclose a virtual document generation means for generating a virtual document from the group of documents from claim 1. Instead, the Smith merely displays chat messages in a thread. As a result, Smith has no need for, and also fails to disclose a virtual document generation means

for selecting the relationship for a group of documents, or forming a section group that includes the group of documents.

Thus, at least the virtual document generation means of independent claim 1, and related dependent claims, is patentable over Smith. Since independent claim 26, and related dependent claims, contain similar limitations, these claims are patentable over Smith for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

CONCLUSION

Applicant's attorney believes this application is in condition for allowance. Should any unresolved issues remain, Examiner is invited to call Applicant's attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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/Erin C. Ming/

Erin C. Ming

Reg. No. 47,797

Customer Number 45728

(650) 493-4540

(650) 493-4549